

Project's tunnel controversy remains

Public hearings to be conducted involving the construction of tunnels at Wildwood

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While most controversies concerning construction of the Provo Canyon highway widening project within Utah County have been resolved, one major issue remains.

Julie Mack, member of the Provo Canyon Advisory Committee said the issue involves construction of tunnels at Wildwood.

The issue is whether one tunnel or two should be constructed to carry downstream traffic. The tunnels would bypass "The Narrows," a scenic, narrow part of the canyon which also carries one of

the state's few remaining Class A trout streams.

Residents and cabin owners at Wildwood are concerned about the project. If two tunnels are constructed, they will lose all of the Wildwood common area and parking area, as well as a couple of cabins. If one tunnel is constructed, less of the land will be taken.

Dan Nelson, superintendent of District 6 of the Utah Department of Transportation, said public hearings will be conducted on the project, probably in March when a consultant in tunnel design will be on board with the district.

"We are looking at two tunnels,

but at this time it is pretty vague," Nelson said. The two tunnels would be approximately 700 feet in length.

Upstream traffic would be carried on a structure, Nelson said.

The construction would be part of Phase 3 of the canyon widening project, and will extend approximately four miles up canyon from Upper Falls, where Phase 2 ends. The work will also include construction of two bridges across Provo River in the Wildwood area.

When Phase 3 is completed, the project will be out of Utah County and into Wasatch County. Nelson said Wasatch County officials and residents have been most supportive of the widening project.

The Wasatch County line is one-

fourth mile upstream from the Sundance turnoff (SR-92) at Wildwood.

Phases 1 and 2 have been the subjects of considerable controversy, including a lawsuit that blocked construction until some of the issues could be resolved.

Julie Mack said the advisory committee has worked closely for the past two years with UDOT officials and consultants in the highway design.

"We won a few and we lost a few," she said. "We were successful in getting guardrails installed, as opposed to concrete barriers."

Landscaping to restore the canyon from damage done in construction was also a major part of the negotiations.

Tunnels